

Utah, The Right Place



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Born in 1820 in County Kerry, Ireland, Connor came with his parents to New York City as a child. In 1839, like many emigrants before and after, Connor enlisted in the regular army. After serving in Indian wars as a private, Connor fought in the Mexican War as a lieutenant and captain. Moving to California dur-

ing the gold rush, he married Johanna Connor, also an Irish emigrant, and the two settled in Stockton, where Connor busied himself in political and military organizations. Connor's previous military experience and political connections led to his commission as colonel.

Stationed for a time at Benecia Barracks on the east shore of San Francisco Bay, Connor's regiment left on July 12, 1862, for Salt Lake City. On the way, the colonel stationed troops at Fort Churchill and Fort Ruby in present-day Nevada. By mid-September, because of his own inclinations and the urging of the territorial appointees, especially Governor Stephen Harding, he rejected Fort Crittenden as an adequate military base and located a site on the bench east of Salt Lake City, which he named Fort Douglas after Senator Stephen A. Douglas. The decision to establish a fort near Utah's capital came in part from his craving to control the Mormons, whom he thought "a community of traitors, murderers, fanatics and whores," and in part from its easier access to the Oregon Trail and its heavy concentration of hostile Shoshonis.

After the local militia units had mustered out of the service and Connor's California Volunteers had established Fort Douglas, the Civil War in Utah settled down to garrison duty and battles with Saints and Numics. As a Mormon war, Connor's campaigns raised the stakes in the conflict begun by the first runaway officials and continued in the Utah Expedition. As a Numic war, the battles with troops from Fort Douglas resembled the anti-Indian campaigns that characterized the Civil War in Colorado, New Mexico, Wyoming, and other western states and territories.

CONFLICT WITH THE NUMICS AND THE BATTLE OF THE BEAR RIVER

Overland migrations and expanded Mormon settlements laid the background for Connor's battles. As the towns and farms spread out in Cache and Box Elder Valleys, they occupied the spring and summer gathering grounds of the

